

allow hard-working Americans to work full-time and not make enough money to pull themselves out of poverty. Eleven million Americans in this country rely on the minimum wage to support themselves and their families. Sixty-four percent of all minimum wage workers are adults with families to feed and rent payments to make.

Today the average minimum wage worker brings home about half of his or her household's weekly earnings. Let me tell you about a family who lives in Clovis, NM, who shared their monthly budget with me. They are a married couple with a 4-year-old son. They both work 40 hours a week at minimum wage jobs. They pay \$450 a month for child care, \$70 dollars for utilities, \$435 for a two-bedroom apartment, \$110 for a car payment, \$45 for car insurance.

After fixed costs, they have just under \$300 a month left to pay for gas, clothes, groceries, and health care. If their little boy gets an ear infection and goes to the doctor, they must feed their family on \$35 a week. If their car break down, they feed and clothe their family on \$20 a week.

This family is not alone. Just in my own congressional district, over 30,000 people get up and go to work every morning to earn a wage that, at the end of a full week, will not even bring them above the poverty level and the ranks of the working poor in our country are growing.

The economy is good. The unemployment rate is at its lowest level in years. The help wanted index is climbing. Yet some hard-working Americans are just not making it.

If left unchanged, by next year the minimum wage will be the lowest point in 40 years. If you are tired of seeing the welfare rolls grow, then let us make work pay. If someone cannot earn enough money working 40 hours a week to feed their family, then we are forcing them into the welfare office. We are telling them it is more profitable to collect than to work.

Do not be fooled by the argument that a modest increase in minimum wage eliminates jobs. Over a dozen recent economic studies have found that modest minimum wage has had an insignificant effect on unemployment levels and has boosted total worker income. Nine states currently have minimum wage levels higher than the Federal minimum wage, and in these States, increasing the minimum wage did not eliminate jobs.

A December Wall Street Journal poll found 75 percent of Americans support raising the minimum wage. To my colleagues, I say the message is clear, minimum wage earners can no longer make it on their salaries, 11 million Americans would get a pay raise if the minimum wage is increased to \$5.15 an hour. A 90 cent per hour increase in the minimum wage means an additional \$1,800 for a minimum wage earner who works full-time year around.

This is as much as the average American family spends on groceries over 9 months.

Five years ago this body voted to increase the minimum wage by a vote of 382 to 37. The large majority of Americans support it. It is time to raise the minimum wage.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE 104TH CONGRESS IN ITS FOURTH MONTH

(Mr. EHLERS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, last month a very important event occurred. We passed a bill giving the President line-item veto authority. We hope this will also pass the Senate and be signed into law.

What is remarkable to me is the pace of what we have been doing in this Congress during the past month and the accomplishments we have made.

And those of you who know me well know I am not this sort of person who brags. In fact, I was born in Minnesota, just like Garrison Keillor, I am somewhat shy and humble. As Garrison Keillor does occasionally, I have to talk about what we do.

We are often criticized as being a do-nothing Congress. I would like to announce we now have a do-something Congress, and I have the figures to prove it, and in the words of the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. HOKE], who spoke a few moments ago, a can-do Congress.

If you look at what this Congress has accomplished in the first month compared to Congresses of the past dozen years, it is striking. The number of hours spent in session, the average for the past 12 years, 28, our Congress, 115, three times as much; number of votes on the House floor, 9.3 is the average of the past dozen years, this year 79, roughly eight times this many; number of committee and subcommittee sessions, average before, 25, this year 155, six times more; number of measures reported out of committee, the average, 1.6, this year, 14, about nine times more.

This Congress is not in the process of reinventing Government, to use that term that is often used. We have a new way of governing. We are getting things done. Not only have we passed a number of important measures such as the balanced budget amendment which Congresses have tried to pass for 40 years or the line-item veto which has been discussed for many years, we have also passed unfunded mandates reform which the States desperately want. We passed the Congressional Accountability Act which applies many of the work place laws to Congress itself. Previous Congresses have exempted themselves.

I think what is even more striking are the internal reforms that we have accomplished, many of which were done the first day of Congress. We have eliminated proxy voting which I felt was an abominable practice. We have

cut committee staff by one-third. We have reduced the number of committees and subcommittees.

And I wish all the people in this land could walk through the basement corridors of the Cannon Building and some of the other buildings and see the dozens and dozens of desks lining the walls in the corridor, the hundreds and hundreds of file cabinets that are there and will be auctioned off because they are no longer needed. The staff that used those desks and those file cabinets are no longer here. Congress truly has cut back, and I hope that trend continues.

I think we have to have many cuts in the budget of this Nation, but we have to start with ourselves first, and we have done that.

We have open committee hearings to the public, and we have made dozens of other changes in reforming the way Congress operates, even on such mundane matters as parking. It was discovered that some lobbyists had been given parking privileges in the parking garages here in our buildings, and that has been stopped. Providing parking for partisan political organizations has been stopped.

What I want all of us to recognize and to appreciate and in fact celebrate, is that we are governing in a different way, and the people of this Nation have responded.

Last year the favorable rating of Congress was about 14 percent. It is now almost 50 percent. We have really made progress in changing things, and the public is responding and saying, "Go on. That is what we like. Keep it up."

Now, I do want to warn the people of this Nation that these cuts we imposed on ourselves, as I said a moment ago, are a precursor of what we will be doing to the entire budget, and no one likes to have their part of the budget cut, but everyone is going to have to share the pain, because the people of this Nation have said, "Enough, we want our budget balanced. We want our taxes to be reasonable. We want our country to go forward and operate the way we have to operate our families and stay within our income."

This Congress has pledged to do that.

#### INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION CONCERNING MEXICAN RESCUE PACKAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is recognized during morning business for 3 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, in order for Congress to begin to fulfill our duty under our Constitution regarding the Mexican rescue package, my colleagues and I have introduced a privileged resolution, House Resolution 57. This resolution will be brought up today under special parliamentary procedure after the 1-minute session and the Journal vote this morning.